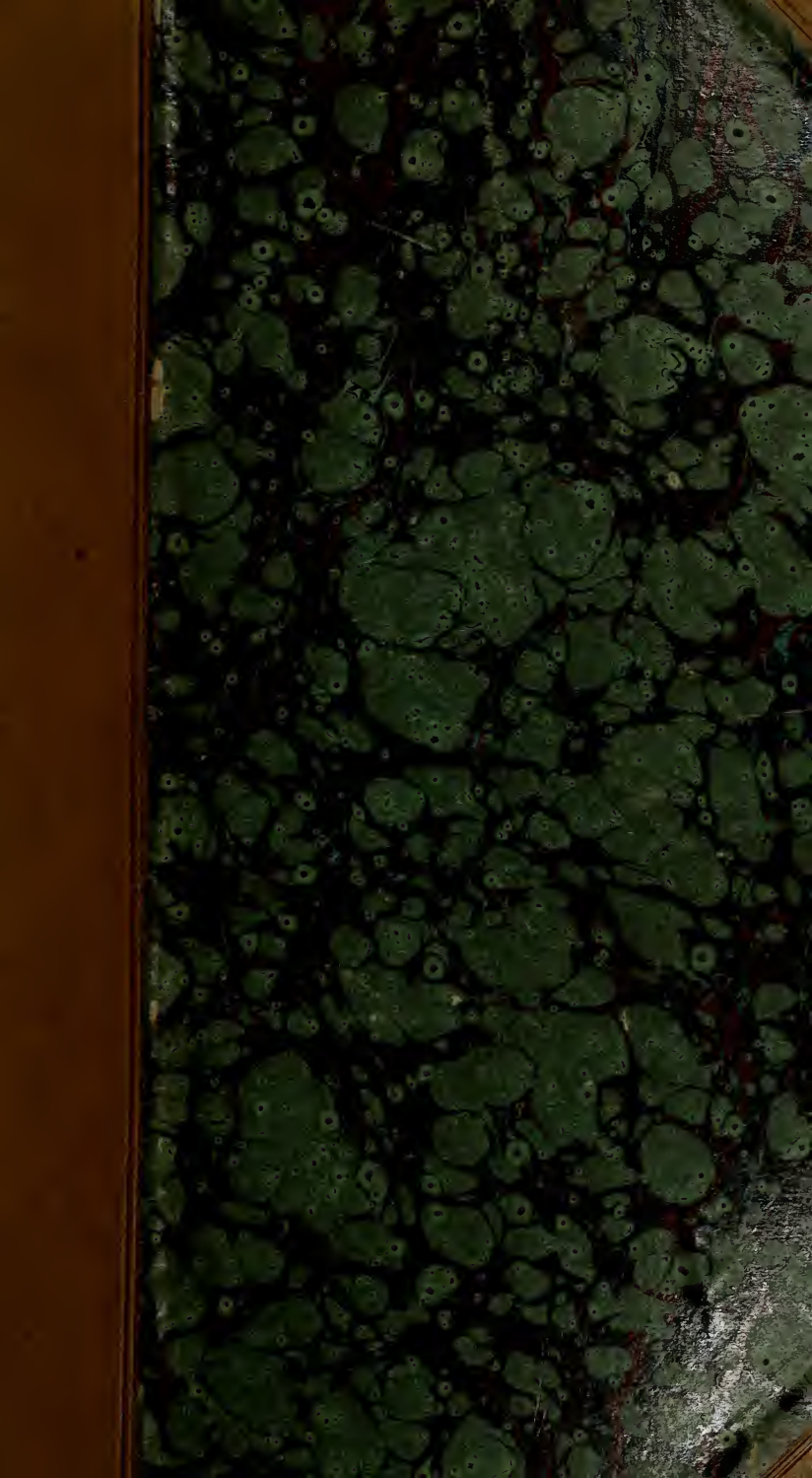






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6.

CORRESPONDENCE

WITH THE

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

WITH RESPECT TO THE

NEGLECT AND SPIRITUAL DESTITUTION

OF THE

PARISH OF TONBRIDGE.

Printed by
SPOTTISWOODE & CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE, LONDON.
1875.



Dry Hill, Tonbridge,
December 27th, 1875.

SIR,—In a letter which you wrote to me by desire, as you tell me, of the Archbishop of Canterbury, dated Nov. 11, 1875, I find this passage: "You are aware, as you have yourself stated, that his Grace has long since received full reports from the churchwardens."

I shall feel obliged to you if you will be so good as to inform me of your authority for the assertion that I have made this statement.—I am, sir, your obedient servant,

HERBERT N. EVANS.

To John B. Lee, Esq.

Addington Park, Croydon,
December 30th, 1875.

DEAR SIR,—Mr. J. B. Lee has placed in my hands a letter addressed by you to him on December 27th, 1875.

Mr. Lee requests me to answer this letter, as the document to which it refers is not in his keeping at Broad Sanctuary, but is preserved amongst the Archbishop's papers here.

On reference to your letter to the Archbishop, dated November 8, 1875, I find the following words: "On the 12th of June last when your Grace honoured" (me) "with an audience at Tonbridge, they (viz., the churchwardens) were both ushered into your presence as I left it."

I presume it is to this interview, of which you have made mention in addressing his Grace, and to what then passed between his Grace and the churchwardens, that special allusion is made in the letter addressed to you on November 11th, respecting the accuracy of which you now make enquiries.—Believe me to be, dear sir, yours faithfully,

CRAUFURD TAIT,
Chaplain.

Dr. Herbert Evans.

29th December, 1875.

SIR,—The Archbishop of Canterbury desires me to send for your consideration, the copy of a letter which he has received from Mr. Fleiming.—I am, yours truly,

CRAUFURD TAIT.

Dr. Evans.

[copy.]

Stafford House, Tonbridge.

December 21st, 1875.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,—On my return home, after a brief absence, I had the pleasure of finding your Grace's kind letter of December 14. informing the memorialists who ad-

dressed your Grace on November 30, of the very satisfactory arrangements which have been made.

I have to acknowledge your Grace's two communications with the grateful thanks of the memorialists for the great pains and trouble your Grace has taken in relieving the parish from its most pressing perplexity.—I have the honour to be, your Grace's obedient servant,

I. PLANT FLEMING.

His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.

Dry Hill,
Tonbridge.

January 13th, 1876.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,—I beg leave to acknowledge the receipt of your Grace's two letters of December 29th and 30th, 1875, and also a copy of a letter to your Grace from Mr. I. Plant Fleming of the 21st of December last.

These letters purport to be a reply to one addressed by me to your Grace's secretary on the 27th of December, but I am quite at a loss to discover in them any answer to the question which I then put to him, namely: what was his authority for asserting that I had "stated that your Grace had long since received full reports from the churchwardens."

I cannot think that your Grace considers that my statement, that the churchwardens were both ushered into your Grace's presence as I left it, is tantamount to the above assertion.

The tenour of all my letters to your Grace and especially of that of August 19th, shows clearly that every step which I have taken rested on the belief that full reports had never been made to your Grace by the churchwardens; and this belief became certainty when I received your Grace's letter, of September 20th, calling on me to substantiate or withdraw certain statements copied by your Grace from my letter of August 19th. It seemed impossible to suppose your Grace could call on me on the 20th September to substantiate (by an expensive lawsuit) statements, of the truth or falsehood of which your Grace had already been certified by the appointed officials on the previous 12th of June.

With respect to the letter of Mr. Fleming as I have no knowledge of the subject of the memorial, or of the signatures attached to it, except from hearsay, while thanking your Grace for taking the trouble to send it to me, I can make no use of it, in the way suggested by your Grace.—I am, your Grace's most obedient and humble servant

HERBERT N. EVANS.

To the most Reverend the Lord Archbishop
of Canterbury.

TONBRIDGE PARISH CHURCH.



*To the Churchwardens of the Parish of St. Peter and St. Paul,
Tonbridge.*

DRY HILL, TONBRIDGE:

June 8, 1875.

GENTLEMEN,—On Wednesday, May 26th, I made an application to you, for the second time, to urge upon you the performance of your duty as Churchwardens, by reporting to the Ordinary the neglected state of this parish in spiritual matters, and informed you of a determination to call immediately a public meeting of the parishioners to consider it and, if possible, to procure its amendment. Two or three hours afterwards you both called on me to press strongly your objections to such a proceeding, and promised me that if I would forbear you would take upon yourselves this burden, and let me know the following Monday, at latest, what you meant to do. At that visit I pointed out to you, that it is by law ‘the duty of the Churchwardens twice a year to present to the Ordinary whatever is wrong or irregular in the Parson or parishioners; and that they may be compelled to do so by the Bishop. As to the Parson, if he is irregular in the performance of Divine Service, or alters it, or omits part of it, or adds things not authorised by the Rubric; also if he neglects to visit the sick or administer the Sacraments.’ Depending on these promises, I took no further step. A fortnight has now elapsed, and I have received no communication of any kind from you.

I must remind you of the occasion of this my repeated appeal to you. On that morning a congregation of 25 or 30 people, including two women to be Churched, assembled at the Church at the usual time of Morning Prayer. There was no Clergyman to take the Service, but when the people were preparing to leave the Church, a neighbouring Clergyman was found, who, at 18 minutes past 11 o’clock, began the prayers. I must also remind you that this is not the first time that no provision for the Service had been made. Not long ago the congregation at the morning weekly Service waited for some time, but, as the Service was not begun, half of them returned home.

It will not, I presume, be denied that these things are ‘wrong and irregular,’ but they are trifling in comparison with many others which I must recall to your notice. In a parish of 4,000 or 5,000

people, with a valuable living, it might be expected that the Incumbent would take care that the Services were regularly conducted, and the pastoral duties faithfully fulfilled; and if his health were unequal to this, that he would provide at least one efficient Curate to help him. For years past the Vicar has been rarely seen, either in the Church or out of it; for weeks together the Services are taken by any Clergyman who can be found, sometimes without giving him any previous notice; we never know who it will be until we see him. This is no random statement. From the beginning of February of this year up to April the 18th, when he read prayers twice, the Vicar was not seen in Church: the usual Wednesday evening Service was discontinued for some weeks, although on April 7th he was at Canterbury. Again, from April 18th to May 30th he was absent from his Church altogether, though at times travelling to London.

So much for the *Services*. Then with regard to *pastoral care*: as concerns the Incumbent, we may be said to have, on his part, none. In round terms, he never visits anyone, well or sick; some of the parishioners, especially the poor, do not know him by sight. In severe illness, if they are urged to send for him, they say it is of no use; for when they have sent he never came, but sent the Scripture Reader, a layman, in his stead. When they or their children are seriously ill, or dying, and longing for the consolations and ministrations of religion, they are obliged to ask a seceder from the Church to come and pray with them, and administer the Holy Communion; not that they prefer this, but those whose duty it is to attend them neglect it. Let me, however, observe that I have no intention to throw blame on the Scripture Reader, whose untiring industry and zeal in doing all the good in his power are most praiseworthy, but he is not a parish Priest.

We have had *no Curate* since November 1873, when the licence of the last Curate expired, and he seceded from the Church, carrying with him about 700 of the congregation, of whom probably nearly all would have remained in the communion of the Church if they had been cared for as they have a right to expect. Who can be surprised that so many should have left it, when they see their ordained Pastor so regardless of their spiritual welfare?

One serious result of this neglect of the poor is that many of their *children* are left *unbaptised* for years: for example, two children were found unbaptised, of whom the youngest was a year old, and three in one family, the eldest being four years old. Meantime, if they are in peril of death, there is no one ready to Baptise them, unless they can find a chance Clergyman, or ask a dissenting minister. One child died about two months ago, another was expected to die of whooping-cough in April last, both of whom were Baptised by a dissenter. These cases occurred in a small district of the parish occupied by poor people, which contains 36 families, with 116 children—176 souls in all.

Of these, six are habitual invalids, some dying of lingering diseases, cancer, pulmonary consumption, disease of heart; five had illness lasting for three months, and sometimes much more. As far as can be ascertained by strict enquiry, one only of these had been seen by Vicar or Curate since December 1872. In this one case the Vicar made three or four visits, at the request of a friend, in 1874, and promised to come again, but has never done so. There is good reason for thinking that the other parts of the parish are not any better cared for than this.

Our National and Infant *Schools* are said to be in good order, and the master is an excellent one; but their good state is not in consequence of any supervision of the Incumbent. In the year ending May 1st, 1875, the School log-book shows two visits from him to the Boys' School—one to hear the boys sing, and one to speak to the master; two each to the Girls' and Infants' Schools, but never to examine or catechise them. From my experience, I thought it was customary for the Incumbent or his Curate to open the Schools daily with prayer, and then to Catechise the children. On October 4th, 1873, at a meeting of the School Committee, some remarks were made on the rare visits of the Vicar to the Schools: he replied that it was not a part of his business to visit them.

Much might be said on the lawless manner, both in omission and addition, in which the *Services* of the Church are conducted, more especially the administration of the Holy Communion; but it is better to defer these matters until after the 1st of July next, when the 'Public Worship Regulation Act,' for the correction of all abuses of this kind by more simple and inexpensive proceedings, will come into operation. It is perhaps these unlawful practices, as much as the irregularities in the Services, which have driven so many parishioners faithfully attached to the Church to any place within their reach, where they can attend a Service conducted with reverence, and according to the rules of the Prayer Book. Every Sunday, at all seasons and in all weathers, crowds of our people may be seen on their way to Hildenborough, the nearest Church, but two miles or more distant; others to Tudely, Bidborough, and even to Tunbridge Wells.

I think that I cannot be mistaken in supposing that all this, or even less, presents enough that is wrong and irregular to call for the interference of the Diocesan, in order to its correction. We have heard much of late about the rights of Patrons and Incumbents, and but little of their duties and responsibilities; but it is difficult to believe that if the Archbishop were fully and candidly informed of the condition of this parish, and not kept purposely in the dark, he would so exclusively regard these rights as to be indifferent to the more than vital claims of hundreds of souls, who are here, in a large and important town in his Diocese, perishing in spiritual ignorance and starvation.

I therefore make this final remonstrance to you, and shall send

a copy of it to the Archbishop, requesting him to use the power which the law has given him, of compelling you to present the neglects and abuses above mentioned.

I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

HERBERT N. EVANS.

DRY HILL, TONBRIDGE:

June 8th, 1875.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,—I beg leave to enclose to your Grace a copy of a letter which I have considered it my duty to write to the Churchwardens of this parish.

I apprehend that the letter enclosed will pretty fully tell the whole story connected with it. I have only therefore most earnestly to entreat your Grace as soon as possible to take such steps as may seem fit and proper to rescue the town from a condition which is deplorable; and also, if the method thus adopted by me is not, by law, the right one, to do me the great favour of having me informed of that which is so.

I am, with great respect,

Your Grace's obedient and humble servant,

HERBERT N. EVANS.

To the most Reverend

The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.

DRY HILL, TONBRIDGE:

July 30th, 1875.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,—I beg leave respectfully to remind your Grace, that I have not received the promised reply to my letter of the 8th of June. In that letter I drew attention to the deplorable condition of the town of Tonbridge in spiritual things, and entreated your Grace to exercise your Episcopal powers to remedy the evils of which the inhabitants have repeatedly complained. At an interview with which your Grace honoured me during your recent visit to Tonbridge, you assured me that a reply to my letter would be sent.

At the same interview your Grace expressed a hope that the arrangement for erecting a Chapel of Ease, instead of a distinct District Church, would be satisfactory to the inhabitants. I replied—as truth compelled me—that it was in the highest degree unsatisfactory to them. The accuracy of my statement is demonstrated by the subsequent memorial, signed even more numerous and more influentially than those which preceded it, in which the subscribers declare that, so far from the arrangement being satisfactory, it is highly disapproved of by them.

I undertake to say, from my knowledge of this place, that the memorial represents the feelings of the overwhelming majority of Churchmen in Tonbridge. Except the Vicar and Patron, and a few of their intimate friends, the conviction is universal that their private interests have been preferred to the general interests of the town. A Curate, subject to the legal control of the Vicar, cannot supply the spiritual wants of the place; and we shall never be satisfied until your Grace permits us to have a Church of our own, endowed and supported by our own efforts, and free from the despotism in Church affairs which has so long existed in Tonbridge.

I could not, without an appearance of disrespect for your Grace's exalted office, describe in adequate terms the deep disappointment occasioned by your recent decision. But I trust that you will not be unwilling to know what is the sum of our complaints. It is this: that your Grace has wholly disregarded the repeated appeals which have been made, on the part of my fellow-townsmen during the last three years, for redress of grave abuses and dereliction of clerical duty; and that when at last the inhabitants, by great efforts, continued for a period of two years, had collected the funds for endowing a new Church, and had obtained a grant from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and a formal acceptance of a proper site—that when, in fact, that important body had ratified our proceedings up to the final point—your Grace intervened, without one word of warning or explanation, and peremptorily substituted, for the scheme of the town, one promoted by the Vicar and Patron in their own interest.

I will recall attention, briefly, to some of the appeals which have been made to your Grace in this matter during the last three years. At your Visitation in November, 1872, you received, in a mode previously sanctioned by your Grace, from a highly respected parishioner, a presentment praying for redress of grievances, showing statistically the inadequate accommodation of the ancient parish Church, and the slovenly and irregular manner in which the services were performed. Next, in the summer of 1873, the two Churchwardens complained to your Grace that the parish had been left for some time before without any resident Clergyman. The Vicar had been absent for several weeks, and the Curate, who was left in sole charge, was believed to be residing as a guest in the Patron's house, at a considerable distance from the town. By your Grace's command he came for a short time to live in the parish, but in November 1873 he seceded from the Church, and from that time to this no regular Curate has been appointed.

These are not the only efforts which have been made to call your Grace's attention to the disgraceful state of the parish. Three memorials, signed by a large proportion of the householders and heads of families, have been presented; and the lamentable neglect of parochial work, of visitation of the sick and poor, and the irreverent mode of conducting Divine Service, led to the appointment of a committee

for establishing a new district. I entreat your Grace to consider what must have been the state of things which could induce gentlemen of high character and position to combine together in avowed opposition to an authority, the Vicar of the parish, whom under ordinary circumstances they would have felt themselves bound to respect and support.

I repeat, emphatically, that nothing will satisfy the inhabitants but a distinct Church and independent ministration. Whatever may be the personal merits of the Curate of the new Chapel of Ease, he cannot escape from the legal control of the Incumbent. The law empowers the Incumbent to regulate the Services in the Chapel, and that power exists inevitably, whether the Curate be appointed by your Grace or otherwise.

Having regard to these circumstances, I earnestly pray that your Grace will consider the following proposal. I conclude that the Committee must abandon their project of a new Church: but there is another part of the town in which a Church and District might be established with great advantage to the inhabitants. In the lower part of the town, between the two now existing Churches, there is a large poor population, in number between two and three thousand—partly in the parish of the mother-Church, and partly in that of St. Stephen's. I venture to ask your Grace whether, if a thoroughly well-considered and matured scheme for a District in this part of the parish were laid before your Grace, you would at least take it into consideration. Of course the scheme, if sanctioned, would be a relief to both parishes. It is notorious that the poor population of the parish of St. Stephen's are too numerous to be efficiently visited by the assiduous, overworked, and conscientious Vicar, Mr. Allnutt. The scheme for a district including part of his parish and part of the ancient parish, and comprising nearly one-third of the population of Tonbridge, is entirely distinct from, and in some respects preferable to, that formerly proposed to your Grace; and if your sanction were given, we should have no difficulty in obtaining another site nearly equidistant from the two existing churches. Of course, if your Grace thought fit, the number of people included in the district might be less or greater than that mentioned. Suffer me to implore your Grace not to reject this proposal without grave deliberation. Consider, I beseech your Grace, the fatal discouragement to all independent efforts at Church extension in the Diocese of Canterbury which must result from your refusal; for it will become manifest, from the history of our efforts, that in this Diocese Churchmen are practically debarred from the benefit of the Acts of Parliament passed for the very purpose of enabling them to establish new districts without the consent of Vicars and Patrons.

I am, your Grace's obedient and humble servant,

HERBERT N. EVANS.

To the most Reverend the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.

ADDINGTON PARK, CROYDON:

August 5th, 1875.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your letter of the 30th July respecting Church affairs at Tonbridge has been laid before me. From press of business I have been unable to attend to it till to-day.

I have used all means in my power to ascertain what are the real feelings of the parishioners of Tonbridge, and what is for the best interests of the parish; and the conclusion at which I have arrived has been that I ought to allow Mr. Deacon's very handsome offer to build a Chapel of Ease and to pay the stipend of the Minister, to take the place of a scheme for the subdivision of the mother parish, of which Mr. Manley is the Incumbent.

You mention complaints which have from time to time been made by certain parishioners, who disapprove of Mr. Manley's mode of conducting Divine Service and providing for the spiritual wants of his parishioners. These complaints have been carefully attended to, as they were made, and I have endeavoured to estimate them at their true value; and where it appeared that there was any just ground for complaint, and a remedy was within my power, I have not failed to take action according to my discretion.

You now ask me to sanction a new plan for the subdivision of the ancient parish of Tonbridge. You do not mention whether Mr. Allnutt is a consenting party to this proposal, and as I pointed out at first, in reference to your original scheme and its connection with Mr. Manley, it is only fair to apply to Mr. Allnutt, as the Clergyman of the parish in which you wish to build a Church, before proceeding with any scheme for the subdivision of his district. It is quite possible that, as in the case with Mr. Manley, Mr. Allnutt may be ready, by his own exertions or those of his friends, to supply any proved deficiency, and that he may satisfactorily establish that his district is not sufficiently large to be subdivided.

Until all these points have been considered, I am not in a condition to make any definite answer to your appeal.

I am, yours truly,

Dr. Evans, &c. &c. &c.

A. C. CANTUAR.

DRY HILL, TONBRIDGE:

August 19th, 1875.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,—I have to express my thanks for the letter of the 5th inst. with which your Grace has honoured me; but I fear that the complaints of the people of this place respecting its spiritual destitution have been misapprehended. Your Grace states that in those complaints we express our disapproval of Mr. Manley's

mode of conducting Divine Service and providing for the spiritual wants of his parishioners. On the mode of doing these things there might be an allowable difference of opinion; but what we have complained of is, that for a long time past there has been no provision whatever made for these wants: that the Vicar does nothing in this respect, and that we have had no Curate for nearly two years: that the sick and poor are entirely without pastoral visitation: that the Sacrament of Baptism is inaccessible to our sick and dying infants, and that of the Lord's Supper to all who are unable to come to Church; that the Public Worship is conducted in a lawless, irregular, and irreverent manner, which is so inexpressibly painful to a large proportion of the congregation as to drive them from the Church: and that our National School children are neither visited nor catechised.

Your Grace observes that 'these complaints have been carefully attended to as they were made,' 'estimated at their true value,' and 'action taken according to your Grace's discretion.' In my last letter I referred to a presentation, in the name of the parishioners, made to your Grace on November 5th, 1872, and I mentioned some of the grievances of which we complained. This was received by your Grace through your Commissary, and a promise given that it would be answered. No notice has ever been taken of it, and nothing has been done to correct the grievances complained of.

The official presentment made by the Churchwardens in the summer of 1873, complaining that for some time there had been neither Vicar nor Curate resident in the parish, has been productive of no action for our relief except for a short time. The Vicar has been living in the parish, but in a state of inactive seclusion, and we have had no Curate. We are not aware that any action has been taken by your Grace in any matter, except the sanction given to the scheme of a Chapel of Ease, devised by the Vicar and Patron in their own interest, and, as has been proved to your Grace, utterly distasteful to the majority of Churchmen in Tonbridge.

On the 8th of June last I enclosed to your Grace a copy of a remonstrance made to the Churchwardens on their failure to report the neglects and abuses in the parish, a short sketch of which was given. I entreated your Grace to compel them to do so, and to take steps at once to rescue us from a condition which is deplorable; and also, if I had not taken the right mode of bringing the matter before your Grace, to inform me what was so. I have had no answer to these entreaties; two or three more months are passed, and our condition is rather worse than better—we have no Curate. I think that what I have stated above shows that the condition of this large parish—a state of things intolerable to all Churchmen who live in it, and incredible to all who do not—has been repeatedly made known to your Grace for nearly three years past, and that nothing whatever has been done which has remedied a single grievance.

As your Grace states that you have used all means in your power to ascertain what are the real feelings of the parishioners, I venture to remark that those feelings were abundantly manifested in three memorials, signed by many Clergymen, by nearly all the masters of the Tonbridge School, and a large proportion of the resident members of the Church of England. I submit that their representations were entitled to as much credit as the private communications of the Patron and his friends. I dwell on the fact that those communications were private, whereas the statements and charges made on our part have been made publicly, and would have been answered long ago if they had been capable of answer. But we have not had a like opportunity of meeting the secret attacks of the persons interested in maintaining the existing monopoly in Church affairs.

With reference to a Church in the lower part of the town, your Grace says: 'As I pointed out at first in reference to your original scheme and its connection with Mr. Manley, it is only fair to apply to Mr. Allnutt, as the Clergyman of the parish in which you wish to build a Church, before proceeding with any scheme for the subdivision of his district.' I trust that your Grace will acquit me of any intention of discourtesy, but the plain truth is that this passage is erroneous as to a simple matter of fact. I must respectfully point out that in your Grace's first letter, in reference to our original scheme and its connection with Mr. Manley, there is not a word to the effect that it would be only fair to apply to Mr. Manley. On the contrary, your Grace told us how we might proceed 'if the promoters did not expect to obtain the co-operation of the Vicar to their scheme.' I enclose a copy of your Grace's letter [inf. p. 10] in order that you may see that at that time you did not consider that it was necessary to apply to Mr. Manley in the first instance, but contemplated our having a Clergyman with charge of a Peel-district, who would be quite independent of the Vicar of the parish.

Permit me to submit to your Grace that the Acts under which 'Particular or Patronage Districts' may be formed, after notice given to Patrons who have an option of building the required Churches themselves, belong to a different set of Acts; but under the Peel-Blandford Acts there is no such option, nor is the consent of the Patron or Incumbent required. The main object of the statesmen who introduced those Acts was to encourage independent efforts at Church-extension. In his speech on Church Extension in the House of Commons (May 5th, 1843), Sir Robert Peel said: 'I trust that when a Clergyman is appointed under this arrangement, it will always occur, or at least it will be the general rule, to assign to such Clergyman a particular district. Instead of making him subsidiary to the Incumbent of a parish Church, I trust that it will be arranged that a district shall be assigned to him, so that his exertions will be accompanied with full responsibility, and that he may have an opportunity of de-

iving all the advantages resulting from a personal intimacy with his parishioners.' (*Hunsard*, vol. lxviii., p. 1278.)

We have assured your Grace more than once that we have no desire to introduce any peculiarities of ritual or ornament, and as to that point we are willing to accept the most stringent test that your Grace may be pleased to impose. But we do desire to have a Church in which the Services may be conducted solemnly, reverently, and heartily, and as the rules of the Church direct. This, we trust, cannot be thought an unreasonable request: we simply ask for that which is the right of all Englishmen—religious liberty—the opportunity of worshipping according to our consciences, and according to law.

I make this final appeal to your Grace to reconsider whether it is just and right in itself, or conducive to the best interests of the parish, to set aside the Acts of Parliament framed to meet such cases as ours, and to prefer private interests to the rights of a large community of loyal and faithful members of the Church. I also entreat your Grace to ascertain for yourself the grievous evils under which the whole parish, and especially the sick and poor, have so long suffered, and still suffer, from abuses and neglect; and if I may be permitted to do so, beg that this be done, not by private questioning, but by public Commission.

I am, your Grace's most obedient humble servant,

HERBERT N. EVANS.

To the most Reverend the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.

[COPY.]

'ADDINGTON PARK, CROYDON:

'October 14, 1873.

'REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,—I beg leave to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 9th inst., enclosing a memorial signed by householders and heads of families in Tonbridge on the subject of the want of Church accommodation in that town.

'As the promoters of this scheme which you have laid before me are not in a position, as you state, to raise sufficient sums to build and endow a new permanent Church, there are two courses only open to them—

'(1) One course is, without seeking for a legal division of the parish, to induce the Vicar of Tonbridge to allow the erection of a temporary Church in his parish, while they undertake to provide the stipend of the Curate who is to officiate therein; which Curate would be under the direction of the Vicar, like any other duly licensed Curate, except so far as there may be an agreement to the contrary.

'(2) If the promoters do not expect to obtain the co-operation of the Vicar to their scheme, on their offering to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners £3,000 for endowments, and proposing to include in a new

district a population of 4,000 persons, they may get assigned a district under the Peel-Blandford Acts, with a view of ultimately erecting a permanent Church, when the money for such a purpose, in addition to the £3,000 for endowments, is forthcoming. Under these circumstances the Commissioners would probably make a grant of such an amount, to meet the £3,000, that the joint interest would be £150 per annum, to be paid as a stipend to the Clergyman undertaking the charge of the Peel district; and he would be quite independent of the Vicar of the parish.

‘Believe me to be, yours faithfully,

‘The Rev. J. Langhorne.’

‘A. C. CANTUAR.

‘Supposing a Peel district to be formed, I know nothing to prevent the income of the Incumbent from being increased by a supplement from the pew-rents in the temporary Church.’

ADDINGTON PARK, CROYDON:

September 20, 1875.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have, on my return from the Continent, received your letter of August 19th.

Respecting other parts of your letter, I do not think it necessary to say more than I have previously communicated to you. But in this letter I find the following statement: ‘What we have complained of is that for a long time past there has been no provision whatever made (*i.e.*, in the Parish Church District of Tonbridge) for these wants (that is, for the spiritual wants of the parishioners): that the Vicar does nothing in this respect, and that we have had no Curate for nearly two years: that the sick and poor are entirely without pastoral visitation: that the Sacrament of Baptism is inaccessible to our sick and dying infants, and that of the Lord’s Supper to all who are unable to come to Church; that public worship is conducted in a lawless, irregular, and irreverent manner, which is so inexpressibly painful to a large proportion of the congregation as to drive them from the Church; and that our National School children are neither visited nor Catechised.’ You add: ‘I entreat your Grace to ascertain for yourself the grievous evils under which the whole parish, and especially the sick and poor, have so long suffered, and still suffer, from abuses and neglect; and if I may be permitted to do so, I beg that this be done, not by private questioning, but by public Commission.’

I now beg leave to inform you that I have conferred with Mr. Manley as to the subject of your letter, and that he concurs with me in the propriety of calling upon you either to substantiate or withdraw the statements in your letter to which I have alluded.

In the event of your refusing to withdraw these statements, and desiring that I should do so, I am quite ready to issue a Commission

to enquire into the allegations; and in the event of your failing to substantiate them, Mr. Manley will take his own course to vindicate his character.

I am, yours truly,

Dr. Evans.

A. C. CANTUAR.

DRY HILL, TONBRIDGE:

October 12, 1875.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,—I have been prevented by illness from answering your Grace's letter of September 20th.

The statements which your Grace quotes from my letter of August 19th respecting the condition of this parish, and which your Grace calls on me either to substantiate or withdraw, are all true, and notorious in the place. I cannot withdraw any one of them, but am prepared to prove them by abundant evidence, before the Commission to enquire into them, which your Grace tells me that you are quite ready to issue. But I will not render myself liable for any law expenses. I hold no official position in the parish, and am not therefore under any obligation to incur them.

I do not understand that your Grace proposes a statutory enquiry under the Church Discipline Act, which relates to offences against the 'Laws Ecclesiastical;' whereas several of the complaints against the Vicar of Tonbridge, *e.g.*, neglect to visit the sick and the parish schools, would not come under that denomination, especially in a criminal suit. Moreover, I am advised by the Proctor whom I have consulted that the expense of such proceedings would be at least £1,000, and might greatly exceed that sum. But I presume that it is your Grace's intention to institute an enquiry quite inexpensively, by commissioning some competent and independent person or persons to take evidence and report to your Grace. If I am right in my conjecture in this respect, I gladly accept your Grace's offer of issuing a Commission for the purpose which I mentioned, namely—that your Grace may ascertain for yourself the neglect of the parish for years past.

I am, your Grace's obedient servant,

HERBERT N. EVANS.

To the most Reverend

The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.

BLAIRLOGIE, STIRLING:

October 20th, 1875.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your letter of the 12th has followed me to this place. I gather from the letter that you are not prepared to make any accusations against the Vicar of Tonbridge before a court having power to sift evidence and examine witnesses on oath. Your com-

plaints, therefore, resolve themselves into a general expression of dissatisfaction as to the way in which the Vicar has fulfilled his duties. Supposing that I were to commission three persons, in an informal way to inquire into the accuracy of your impressions and allegations, and they were to report unfavourably to the Vicar, I do not know what I could do more in the matter than see, as I have already done, that the Vicar has an efficient and proper representative during his leave of absence on account of ill-health, and that his representative has such assistance in the care of the parish as is requisite; while if the persons commissioned reported in favour of the Vicar you would probably not be satisfied.

Such a legal Commission of Enquiry under the Church Discipline Act as you not unnaturally shrink from, might possibly produce different results; but on the whole I think you act wisely in declining, on full consideration, to promote such an enquiry, and I trust you will find, on reflection, that all has been done in this matter which the circumstances of the case permit of, as just and fair to all parties concerned.

I remain, your faithful servant,

Dr. Evans, Tonbridge.

A. C. CANTUAR.

P.S.—I am sorry to hear of your ill-health.

DRY HILL, TONBRIDGE:

November 8th, 1875.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,—I have received your Grace's letter of October 20th, which you have done me the honour to send me.

In the former one of September 20th your Grace called on me, as the result of a conference with the Vicar, either to substantiate or withdraw my statements respecting the neglect of the parish; and if I refused to withdraw them, and desired that you should do so, your Grace informed me that you were quite ready to issue a Commission to enquire into the allegations. To this I replied that the statements are all true, and notorious in the place; that I cannot withdraw any one of them, but am prepared to prove them by abundant evidence; that I gladly accept your Grace's offer of a Commission, but will not render myself liable for any law expenses. From these words your Grace gathers the direct contrary—that I am *not* prepared, and shrink from and decline enquiry. In order that there may be no mistake as to the party which declines investigation, I repeat to your Grace that I do not shrink from the strictest enquiry, if your Grace will fulfil your promise of issuing a Commission for that purpose. If this Commission consists of competent and independent persons, who will give us a fair hearing, I am confident that the result will satisfy the people of Tonbridge. It would be perfectly indifferent to the witnesses how much their evidence were sifted, and whether they were examined on oath or not.

Why your Grace now declines to grant the Commission which you

so recently told me that you were quite ready to issue, and how I am to substantiate my statements when your Grace withholds the Commission before which you have called on me to do so, I am at a loss to imagine. If, indeed, the only way by which your Grace could satisfy yourself of their truth were an expensive lawsuit, the refusal to incur law expenses might give some colour to the construing that refusal as a shrinking from enquiry; but I am instructed that a compulsory report from the Churchwardens is the legal course to take in cases like ours, and this I earnestly entreated your Grace several months ago to require of them. On the 12th of June, when your Grace honoured me with an audience in Tonbridge, they both were ushered into your presence as I left it: they could have informed you of the truth or falsehood of my complaints. Besides these methods, the case which your Grace puts before me as a supposition shows, I presume, that such a proceeding is open to you if you were willing to adopt it.

The statements made by me have been before the public since June 8th last; there has been ample time for the Vicar to vindicate his character; but neither he nor, as far as I can ascertain, any other person has ever impugned the truth of one word of them. They are not, as your Grace calls them, impressions—general expressions of dissatisfaction as to the way in which the Vicar has fulfilled his duties, but plain statements of facts, with exact dates and statistics, showing that he has not fulfilled his most important duties in any way—and, as a consequence, the deplorable state of the parish. The names only are omitted, and these I can produce whenever required to do so.

When calling on me to substantiate the statements, your Grace does not tell me which of them are denied: some of them carry their own means of verification: *e.g.*, your Grace knows whether you have licensed any Curate to Tonbridge since November 1873; and that relating to the Schools can be verified in a few minutes by looking at the School Log-book.

In answering the last part of your Grace's letter I feel considerable difficulty. If I say nothing, your Grace may suppose that I concur in it; if I answer it truthfully, I may seem to forget what is due to your Grace's high position in the Church. In a sort of appeal to me you say, 'I trust you will find on reflection that all has been done in this matter which the circumstances of the case permit of, as just and fair to all parties concerned.'

No amount of reflection will make me think it is just and fair to decide any cause without hearing both sides. Neither can I consider it just and fair that your Grace should make a statement most injurious to the character of several Clergymen and gentlemen, and when it is proved to your Grace that such statement is not true, instead of withdrawing it, you should virtually repeat it, by stating, 'I do not think it necessary to say more than I have previously communicated to you.'

As to two of the parties concerned, namely, the Patron and the

Vicar, it cannot be just and fair to them to sanction the sacrifice of the spiritual welfare of the parishioners to their private interests ; that is to frustrate the very end for which they, as Patron and Vicar, exist. The third party consists of a large portion of the loyal Churchmen of the parish. I cannot think that all has been done for them that could be, or alter the view which, with almost all my townsmen, I hold, and have expressed in my former letters to your Grace. They have asked for nothing but what is accordant with the law and their rights, and your Grace has denied it them. For three years they have tried in vain every means which they could devise to obtain the redress of their grievances at your Grace's hands, the chief of these grievances being that the Vicar gave no pastoral care, and that we had no Curate. During the last two months a representative of the absent Vicar has been living here, but he has been and still is alone and unassisted, except by any Clergyman who can be procured for the occasion ;* although your Grace stated to me, on October 20th last, that you had 'already seen that he has such assistance as is requisite.' I do not doubt that he will do all that is in his power, but for one Clergyman to perform the pastoral duties of this parish is impossible.

I now make an end of a correspondence which has been a very painful one to me, and which I should never have begun unless I had hoped that as soon as the neglect in this large parish was fully made known to your Grace, it would be enquired into and rectified. In this hope I have been disappointed, and now that your Grace tells me that the complaints of what we have considered most serious delinquencies are mere impressions, I feel that it is useless to continue it.

I am, your Grace's most obedient and humble servant,

HERBERT N. EVANS.

The most Reverend

The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.

2 BROAD SANCTUARY, WESTMINSTER, S.W. :

November 11th, 1875.

Sir,—I am desired by the Archbishop of Canterbury to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of November 8.

His Grace agrees with you that no good purpose would be subserved by your further continuing the correspondence ; and would only remark, in conclusion, that he understands your repeated statement that 'you decline to render yourself liable for any law expenses in connection with the Commission of Enquiry, to be tantamount to your stating that you decline his offer to issue such a Commission as alone would enter on an investigation of the complaints you have

* This is still true, December 3, 1875.

made with any hope of arriving at a just decision. You are aware, as you have yourself stated, that his Grace has long since received full reports from the Churchwardens, and any further investigation could only be satisfactorily conducted by a Commission under the Act, which he understands you to decline.

Believe me to be, sir, yours truly,

JOHN B. LEE.

Herbert N. Evans, Esq.,
Dry Hill, Tonbridge.

*From the 'Tonbridge Free Press' of June 19, August 28, and
November 13, 1875.*

